

BROAD SHEET



New Chief Executive announced

Sarah Cowley (inset) has been appointed the new Chief Executive of the Broads Authority.

Sarah brings an impressive record of leadership and delivery. Over the past 20 years she has worked as a diplomat in the UK and internationally. She was previously Ambassador to Latvia and her current role is Deputy Ambassador to Spain. She grew up in Norfolk and will be returning home to take up the role. With a longstanding personal connection to the Broads and a deep commitment

to protected landscapes, she has great passion for the area and a clear vision to set the Broads up for the future. She has a lifelong love of Norfolk's landscapes and enjoys exploring the waterways and wildlife of the Broads on her paddleboard. Having served 25 years as Chief Executive of the Authority, John Packman (pictured above) announced

last summer that he intended to retire. The search for his replacement concluded on the 19 December when the Board of the Authority approved the appointment as required by the Broads Act 1988. John will retire in May with Emma Krelle, Director of Resources acting as interim until Sarah takes up the role on 3 August.

Dealing with late and non-payment of tolls

This year a £25 administration charge was introduced for late-payers and this will now be applied at the earlier first letter 'Notice of Contravention' stage. An additional £25 will also be charged if a second letter is required. This only contributes a small amount to the extra costs of dealing with late

payments but it is hoped it will help combat the problem.

The Authority will only prosecute if all other avenues have failed to secure payment. Unfortunately, this year there has been a significant rise in cases submitted for prosecution. On 28 January and 4 February many cases involving unregistered boats and unpaid tolls were concluded. Of the 26 cases, 3 were resolved out

of Court with payment received. 22 other people were successfully prosecuted for 33 offences with nearly £26,000 awarded in fines, victim surcharges, costs and compensation. Further cases will be heard in the coming weeks and another is due to go to trial later this year. *The Authority urges anyone experiencing difficulty paying, to contact the Tolls Team at the earliest opportunity.*

Have your say on smoke alarms (BSS consultation)

The Boat Safety Standards Setting Forum is currently running a consultation regarding proposals to introduce new mandatory requirements for smoke alarms on all classes of boat with accommodation spaces. The requirement will be for universal BS EN 14604:2005 standard smoke alarms (as used in homes and widely available) and will become an obligation of the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS). The change will help provide earlier warning and reduce the risk of fire spreading within the affected and neighbouring vessels.

The consultation closes at 17:00hrs on 26 March 2026. To take part follow this link www.boatsafetyscheme.org/about-us/consultations-reviews/smoke-alarm-consultation-bs-ssf/

Capital projects

At the start of the financial year the Authority was awarded £1.3m from Defra for capital works. The capital grant provides limited relief from the reduction in the revenue grant, but it does enable some significant projects across the Broads.

The Authority was also successful in gaining approval for the funds to pay for items that improve access to and from the water.

The programme is progressing well, it includes:

- In September the Authority completed the purchase of 28ha of wetland known as Mallow Marsh, near Barton Turf. The site holds a number of internationally-important designations for nature and wildlife. Once restored and managed, it will make a significant contribution towards Defra's 30 x 30 biodiversity targets.

- Upgrades for up to 40 electric charging pillars. Analysis of recent survey responses will determine if the current pre-paid card system could be replaced with a more modern app-based system.
- Improvements to the toilet and shower facilities at Acle Bridge and Great Yarmouth Yacht Station. Works will begin soon with a view to completion before the start of the 2026 season.
- A floating pontoon mooring to improve access at Castle Marsh on the River Waveney (subject to appropriate consultation and planning permission).
- A solar power scheme for the Dockyard.
- Equipment purchases including mowers, Nato floats, a remote-controlled tracked mower, Truxor attachments and a fen harvester with a double chop head.

Mallow Marsh - Site visit with Ecologist and Maintenance team members

Ranger launch - River Bure



Fact file:

Navigation maintenance

- Replaced 100 mooring posts
- Completed 500 hours of grass

- cutting on and around moorings
- Spread over 100m² of mooring path material
- Replaced 3 water points

- at Reedham with upgraded reels and hoses
- Completed 218 days of aquatic water plant cutting to maintain the navigable channels

Upton Dyke



Navigation budget... challenges and trends

In December the Authority announced navigation charge increases of 3.5% for 2026/27.

The decline of boat ownership is just one of the factors that Members had to consider when setting the budget. This worldwide trend is thought to be due to economic challenges and less young people interested in owning a boat.

The growth of abandoned or sunken boats and non-compliant vessels is also creating an increasing strain on Authority resources and the navigation budget.

Rangers have dealt with over 40 such vessels this year. This compares with 28 last year and 19 in 2023. Prior to 2020 it would have been unusual to deal with more than a handful in a year. This is a trend which other inland waterway authorities are also tackling although these issues are not as acute in the Broads.

A vessel is classed as 'abandoned' if it does not have an existing owner registered with the Authority. Of the 20 dealt with this year, 5 were registered after they were served with a notice. The others were removed from the waterways by

the Authority.

Dealing with sunken vessels is complicated, hazardous and costly. There were 10 sunken vessels this year of which 2 were recovered by their owners. 8 others were issued with notices and subsequently recovered and removed by the Authority.

Notices were also issued to 10 unserviceable boats of which 2 were repaired by the owners and 8 removed from the waterways.

Boats that are seized by the Authority are either sold or broken up but only after the correct process has been followed. Attempts will be made to contact previously known owners of boats suspected as being abandoned. A registration letter is then issued providing 28 days to register the boat. Notices of Contravention and (if appropriate) Memorandum of Navigation Warnings will follow. If this process is exhausted without a successful registration an ASV notice is issued which normally gives 28 days for someone to come forward after which the Authority takes ownership and will make arrangements for its removal and disposal.

Underwater drone trials

A capital grant from National Parks England has enabled the Authority to purchase an underwater drone and begin a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) test and trial project. The aim is to deploy the ROV for a variety of tasks allowing the operator an easier way of gaining images and video of underwater environments from the safety of dry land, negating the need for specialist divers. The first outing for the ROV was a test dive around Mutford Lock which proved very successful. Even in murky conditions clear images of the lock gates were obtained including detail of the penstocks, bolts, shoes and other mechanisms. It is thought that over the course of the trial the drone can be used in many other scenarios including surveying other structures and wrecks to aid navigation works.



Image right: A view of Mutford Lock's gates and the marine life that lives there.



Dredging updates

2025 was a mixed picture of steady progress in some river sections and significant disruptions in others. Works included dredging the access dykes to Bargate Broad and accumulations of sediment on bends between Trowse Rail Bridge and Postwick Viaduct on the Yare. These produced a total of 6,430m³ of sediment which was successfully reused at Postwick Marshes for a floodbank strengthening scheme in partnership with the Environment Agency. Sediment was also reused to maintain floodbanks on the River Waveney at Geldeston.

Prolonged salinity in the upper Thurne exceeded the safe dredging threshold of 8,400 µS/cm from October to November. Dredging was paused because of the resulting danger to fish. This compressed the short winter operating window, forcing the Authority to scale back the programme and focus on dredging upstream of Martham Ferry from December. Dredging the marked channel through Hickling has been put

back to later in 2026/27.

The cumulative benefits of the dredging work in 2025 include improved channel depths, reduced shoaling in priority reaches, and safer, more reliable navigation. Dredging the ends of the navigation towards Somerton Dyke and Martham Dyke will ease the recent navigation issues where there has been abundant water plant growth during the summer.

The Authority is trialling different dredging methods in the Bure at Yarmouth. Accumulated shoals on bends near the Yacht Station will be removed by a cutter pump. The fluidised sediment will be carried on the strong ebb tide, taking it out to sea. Ongoing surveys will help us decide if this technique could be used for regular maintenance dredging near Yarmouth.

Plans for 2026 include dredging busy stretches of the Bure between Wroxham and Horning, the Hickling Broad marked channel and bends in the Chet, where sediment and reed growth has encroached into the channel.

Broads Authority 24-hr moorings works

Aldeby Hall was added to our free 24-hr mooring locations.

This had full refurbishment, with all new timber work, mooring posts and signs. The ground was also made up behind the moorings and turfed.

Irstead Staithe – Full refurbishment of timber, posts and new surfacing.

Cantley – Refurbished 60m of capping, waling and mooring posts and the entire length of the mooring surface.

Ranworth Staithe – 20m section of mooring repiled.

Rockland Short Dyke – over 60m of double capping replaced.

Wroxham Broad Island (downstream) – Full timber refurbishment.

Martham Bank – Over 30m of capping replaced.

Horning Parish Staithe – 16m of capping replaced.

Brundall Church Fen – Full timber refurbishment including posts.

Loddon Staithe – Fitted with new safety chain and brackets.

Electric Charging Points

5 new electric charging points were installed at Great Yarmouth Yacht Station last year.

This year we intend to install 2 new points with a new connection at Martham Bank, Potter Heigham and 3 additional posts at Norwich Yacht Station.

Future projects for 2026/27:

- Refurbishment of the moorings at Worlingham and Martham Bank.
- Installation of a 20m pontoon mooring at Castle Marsh (subject to planning consent).
- Repairs to moorings at Chedgrave Common.